

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 L-03 IO-11 NSC-05 AID-05 COME-00

EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04

SIL-01 OMB-01 /070 W

----- 092590

R 021615Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2712

INFO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY BANJUL

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SL LI

SUBJECT: OPENING OF MANO RIVER BRIDGE BETWEEN LIBERIA AND
SIERRA LEONE

1. ON FEBRUARY 27, PRESIDENTS STEVENS AND TOLBERT IN
IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY OFFICIAL OPENED THE MANO RIVER BRIDGE
PROVIDING SYMBOLIC LINK BETWEEN THESE TWO COUNTRIES AND
IMPORTANT SYMBOL OF THE DETERMINATION OF BOTH PRESIDENTS
TO FURTHER EXPAND LINKS THROUGH THE MANO RIVER UNION.

2. IN SPEECHES BY BOTH PRESIDENTS STEVENS AND TOLBERT,
IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACHED TO REGIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH
THE MRU WAS STRESSED. HIGH LEVEL TURNOUT OF OFFICIALS
OF BOTH COUNTRIES TO THE REMOTE LOCATION SHOWED GROWING
REALITY OF THE MRU. MRU SECRETARY-GENERAL CYRIL BRIGHT
REVIEWED STATUS OF MRU PROJECTS THAT FURTHER SHOW EXPANDING
INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN TWO FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS.

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3. HIGH LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES FROM IVORY COAST (VICE-PRESIDENT DENIS) GHANA (GENERAL OKAI) AND GUINEA GAVE OPENING AN INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR. BOTH PRESIDENTS PROFOUNDLY THANKED SUPPORTERS, ESPECIALLY AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK WHICH FINANCED CONSTRUCTION AND USAID, WHICH FINANCED ORIGINAL ENGINEERING STUDIES. USAID/L DIRECTOR STANLEY SIEGEL, WAS ONLY BILATERAL REPRESENTATIVE ASKED TO DELIVER GREETINGS.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH A SMALL ORGANIZATION IN RELATIVE TERMS, CLEAR COMMITMENT OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS TO COOPERATE WITHIN MRU IS POSITIVE SIGN. BESIDES REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, NEXT YEAR SHOULD SEE CUSTOMS AGREEMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF SEVERAL FACTORIES TO PRODUCE FOR MARKETS OF BOTH COUNTRIES. POLITICALLY, IT IS DEFINITELY IN INTEREST OF USG TO ENCOURAGE GOSL'S PARTNERSHIP WITH GOL AS MEANS OF INDUCING MODERATION AND PROVIDING POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE TO NEIGHBORING GUINEA. ONLY NEGATIVE ASPECT OF BRIDGE IS FEAR BY MANY IS GOSL THAT DIAMOND SMUGGLING INTO LIBERIA, ALREADY A PROBLEM, WILL BECOME EVEN MORE SO. SAMUELS

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